

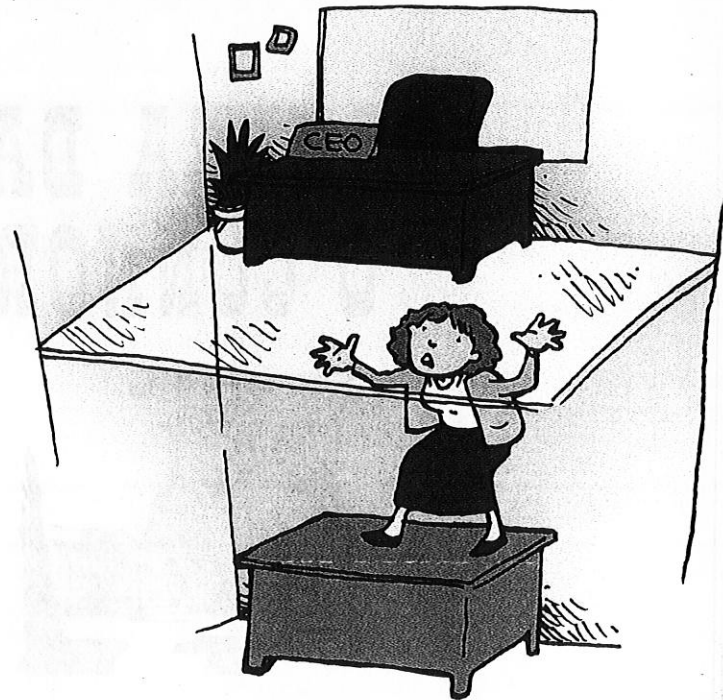
# Changes for Women

At the end of World War II, many women who had been working in defense industries were happy to go home. Homemaking was considered right for women who could afford not to work in the 1950s. In the next decade, though, a major change in attitudes began with the publication of Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan pointed out that many women wanted to do more than raise a family and keep house. In the late 1960s, Friedan and others founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) to increase and support women's rights at home and in the workplace. Some conservative women opposed this movement, saying traditional life was best.

In 1972, the Supreme Court, in the case of *Roe v. Wade*, ended the ban most states had placed on abortion. Many women felt the ruling protected their personal right to choose. They also felt that legal abortion was safer because it could be regulated. Other people opposed abortion because they thought it was morally wrong. The debate continues through the new millennium.

In the 1970s, the women's movement focused on an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution, which said no person's rights could be denied because of his or her sex. The amendment failed to pass by a narrow margin. In the meantime, publications like Gloria Steinem's *Ms. Magazine*, and debate nationwide had awakened many Americans to the need for equal treatment of women.

Taking a job became the normal thing for most women. More women entered Congress and gained other offices. Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman Supreme Court Justice, and Geraldine Ferraro the first female major party vice-presidential candidate. Although women were still seeking better childcare, equal pay for equal work, and more opportunities in work and education, much progress had been made.



*Women found a "glass ceiling" of prejudice that kept them from some top jobs.*



*The women's movement gave girls more choice of what to wear to school.*

# SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR



Sandra Day O'Connor distinguished herself among women in history by becoming the first woman to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court. Her nomination by President Reagan in 1981 and her approval by the U.S. Senate was applauded by women everywhere as one more stride toward equality. She was born in El Paso, Texas, in 1930 and grew up on a 150,000 acre ranch in southeastern Arizona that had been founded by her grandfather. Because her parents felt she was too bright to be educated by the rural schools of the area, they sent her to live with her maternal grandmother in El Paso at the age of five. There she attended Redford School, a private school for girls. She did come back to visit her parents often, and her loneliness for home caused her to spend part of her high school education in Lordsburg (near her home), but that meant boarding the bus before dawn and getting home after dark at night.

After high school she enrolled in Stanford University, where she graduated *magna cum laude* in 1950. She also graduated from Stanford's School of Law in 1952. It was there Sandra Day met her husband-to-be, John Jay O'Connor, another student of law. She tried to get jobs with several Los Angeles and San Francisco law firms, but was turned away because she was a woman. She then turned to public service, working as a deputy attorney in San Mateo, California, while her husband finished law school. The couple then spent three years in West Germany. In 1957 they settled in Maricopa County, Arizona, where she opened her practice. In 1969 she was appointed to fill a vacancy in the state senate and her career in politics began. During her five years in the senate she championed the rights of women. In 1974 she shifted to the judiciary department winning a hard-fought battle for a judgeship. In 1979 she was appointed to serve on the Arizona Court of Appeals. Her moderate views and conservatism made her a politically attractive candidate. When he campaigned for the presidency, Ronald Reagan incurred much resentment from women because of his opposition to the ERA. He thus vowed to fill the first vacancy in the Supreme Court with the most qualified woman. His search ended with Sandra Day O'Connor. Although her appointment was eventually approved by the Senate, there were several opponents who voiced their opposition during the confirmation hearings. It was her split with basic Republican values on abortion that caused most of the opposition, but when the final vote was taken, she was approved by ninety-one U.S. senators.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**For Thinking and Discussing**

1. How would Sandra Day O'Connor's early experience in riding a bus to school have helped to make her an opponent against busing?  
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2. As a state legislator, Sandra Day O'Connor was very much concerned with fighting discrimination against women. Why do you think this was such a major issue with her?  
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3. Why did Ronald Reagan launch an all out search in 1981 to find a woman to replace Justice Potter Stewart, when he retired from the U.S. Supreme Court?  
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4. On July 7, 1981, Ronald Reagan announced that his search for the "most qualified woman" was over. He had found "Sandra Day O'Connor, truly a person for all seasons." What did Reagan mean by this statement?  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

5. Although she was approved for the appointment to the Supreme Court, there was a certain amount of opposition that surfaced during the confirmation hearings. Most of it centered around her alleged "lack of respect for traditional family values." What complaint against Sandra Day O'Connor were these opponents raising?

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1. On-line or in a reference book, find out what year Sandra Day O'Connor became a Supreme Court Justice?
2. Is she still on the Supreme Court? If not, when did she retire?
3. What does the phrase, "glass ceiling" mean?
4. Sarah Palin was not the 1<sup>st</sup> woman to be a major party candidate for Vice-president; who was? When did she run?
5. Do you think that women still need laws to protect them from discrimination?  
Explain your answer.